

## *Answering the Parent-Child Dedication/Infant Baptism Question*

Here at Community Church, we are often asked why we do parent-child dedications and not infant baptisms. Many churches in our community practice infant baptism and many parents feel it is important to go through that process with their children. So when young families begin attending Community Church, they are often surprised that we don't baptize infants but practice parent-child dedication instead. What is Community Church's reason for this? The answer is that in all things the Bible is our supreme authority; not church traditions, not our opinions or preferences. God's Word has the final say.

So when it comes to the question of parent-child dedication or infant baptism, we must look to the Scriptures to decide our direction. And when we do, the Bible makes several ideas very clear.

**First, the Bible teaches that baptism is to be reserved for believers. It is not an activity meant for unbelievers.**

**Acts 2:41** "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."

**Acts 8:13** "Simon himself believed and was baptized."

**Acts 18:8** "Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized."

In the Bible, baptism is always performed when someone has heard the Good News of Jesus Christ and believed. Conversely, nowhere in Scripture is an unbeliever baptized for any reason. Some people have been taught that baptism provides a kind of special protection, even salvation, for their child until the child is old enough to believe. However, the Bible doesn't teach this about baptism. Instead, it teaches that baptism is reserved for those who have already chosen to believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

**Second, just as Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose again, so baptism symbolically represents a believer's death, burial, and resurrection in Christ. Again, because of this symbolism, it is not intended for an unbelieving person; adult or infant.**

**1 Corinthians 15:3-4** "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

**Colossians 2:12** "having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, Who raised Him from the dead."

**Romans 6:4** "We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Baptism is intended to be a public declaration of our faith in Jesus. In baptism we are identifying ourselves with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism is an unequivocal declaration of allegiance to Jesus Christ. Because of this, it is not intended for any unbelieving person, young or old.

**Third, there is no record of infants being baptized in the Scriptures, only those old enough to believe.**

Given baptism's meaning, this makes sense because infants wouldn't have the ability to understand the Gospel and respond to Jesus. However, as the child grows, and the parent(s) teach them, their ability to understand and respond may develop very early on.

Therefore, we will baptize children when they are old enough to understand the Gospel (that we are sinners, guilty before a holy God, unable to save ourselves, and that Jesus died in order to forgive our sin and be our Savior and Lord), articulate their understanding, and respond to it.

And again, because the Bible is our highest authority, we must allow its truth to ultimately shape our thinking in all matters, not just about baptism.

**Fourth and finally, the Bible contains examples of babies and children being dedicated.**

A couple of examples may be helpful. The prophet Samuel, in the Old Testament, was dedicated to the Lord by his mother, Hannah. She had prayed for a child and when the Lord answered her prayer and provided Samuel, she responded by dedicating him to the Lord. (You can read the full story in 1 Samuel 1 and 2.)

Another example would be Jesus who was dedicated as an infant (see Luke 2:22) and then baptized as an adult by John the Baptist (see Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-13; or Luke 3:21-22).

Baptism is a declaration about the commitment that a person has already made to Jesus Christ. Parent-Child Dedication, on the other hand, is a vow before the Lord to raise our children to know the Lord as the Bible reveals Him. In the parent-child dedication, it is the parents who are committing themselves to do all they can to create in their home an environment that is most conducive to their child knowing fully about the Lord. (*This idea is developed more fully in our Parent-Child Dedication class.*)

### **Our Conclusion**

Again, our final authority in all matters is the Bible, God's Word; not church tradition, or someone's opinion. And its teaching is the ultimate and final voice on this matter of infant baptism or parent-child dedication.

**Therefore, because of the meaning of baptism, because of the consistent Scriptural evidence that baptism always follows belief, and because of the Biblical precedent of child dedication, Community Church has chosen to practice Parent-Child Dedication and to refrain from infant baptism.**